

Spring 1985

XLV



Measure '85

Editor	Nichole Steininger
Staff	Michele York Charles Borger Tom Cortes
Advisor	Mr. John D. Groppe
Photography	John Freiburger Kevin Schuck Nichole Steininger
Printer	Messenger Press Carthagena, Ohio

MEASURE is the literary magazine of the students and faculty of St. Joseph's College, Rensselaer, Indiana.

Volume XLV
Spring, Nineteen hundred eighty-five

Sheer Poetry

I searched the sky
I search the sea
For the essence of
Sheer Poetry.

And in the water
I found a place
Of surmounting beauty
And charming grace.

But searching the land
I found a soul
Displaying her grace
On a balancing pole.

She swoons through the air
'gainst gravity's pull
Her eyes make the sparkles
Of a four — carat jewel.

And each flowing move
Of her dainty form
Is serene to the mind
And to the heart very warm.

So
I believe I have found
And no better may see
The essence of
Sheer Poetry!

Tom Cortes

of misplaced purpose

excuse me,
 can you tell me where i am?
i mean,
 ... my mind,
 my soul,
 my meaning.
i really do believe that i have lost them.
i thought they were here ...
 ... they must be around.
can you help me find them ...
 ... do you care?
maybe i traded them in last semester ...
 ... for grades ...
 ... i don't remember ...
... it could have been that one night stand ...
 ... last october ...
 ... perhaps ...
... or the argument i had with my parents over
 something i believe in ...
 ... it could have been ...
... am i lost in a facade that i have imagined
 to be real ...
 ... a possibility ...
... or do i hide behind a mask that i cleverly wear ...
 ... was there a reason ...
... maybe it is because i smiled and said i was fine
 when i really hurt inside.
i feel like a dead, aged tree ...
 ... brittle ...
 ... weathered ...
my limbs snapped off and scattered about me ...
 ... rotting ...
... or picked up and tossed into a flame to help
 someone else's fire burn brighter.
maybe i am a dry, withered leaf,
 stripped from my source of life ...
 ... crushed ...
 ... trampled ...

. . . whisked about and scattered aimlessly by the
wind.

i know i have a body . . .

. . . i can see,

hear,

taste,

smell . . .

. . . but,

where is my meaning,

my purpose,

me?

excuse me,

can you tell me where i am?

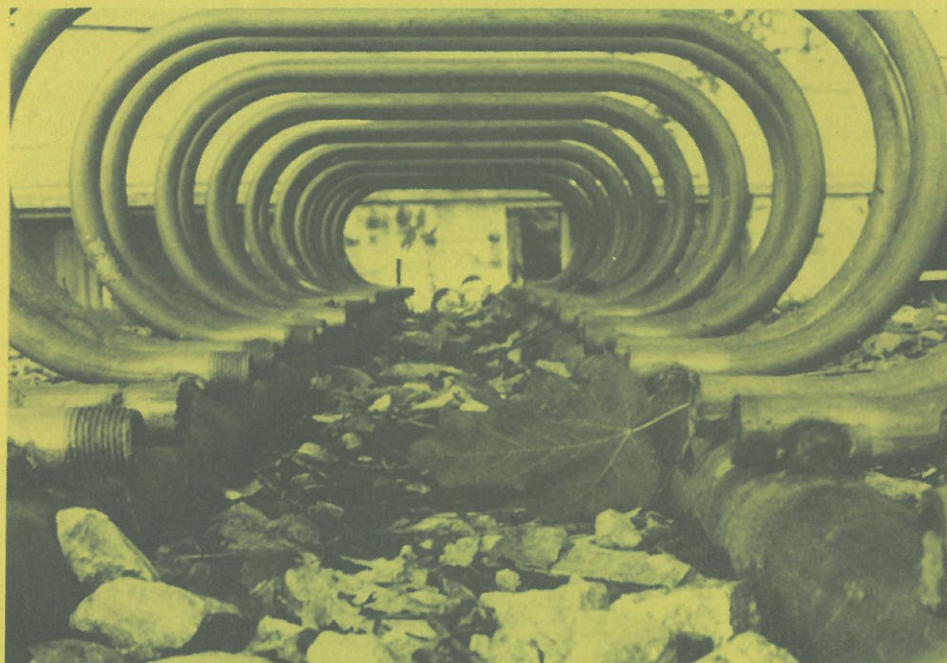
i do believe i am lost . . .

. . . can you help me . . .

. . . do you care?

Daniel L. Lengerich II

Winner of Best Student Poetry



Good Love is Hard to Find

Charles Borger

"Is this all you have to report to me?" muttered the Chairman of the High Council of Planets, his metallic voice reaching new lows in superior frigidity.

"No," replied the Andeluvian Commissioner, "No sir, there is one other minor detail, but I do not think that it warrants the attention of the High Council Chairman."

"Well, since you never come around any more and I do not know when I will see you next, you may presume to bother me with this mere detail," the High Councilor replied through a small speaker in the lower part of his face. No movement could be detected by the Commissioner's scanner, yet the vibrations could be picked up clearly enough, and the android feared that these same vibrations would soon gain frequency and intensity. His message would not be disruptive really — it was nothing major, possibly not even cause for alarm. Little things like this many times had a way of righting themselves.

"It . . .," stammered the Commissioner, "It seems that production has dropped off a few points in the last quarter." Just as the Commissioner had feared, lights of various colors began to blink wildly on the High Councilor's face. The Commissioner had only been in the system a few days, but had had time to have all his circuits checked and rewired where necessary. His programming had also been maintained, and he had even found time for a nice wax and shine job. He had been feeling quite good, in fact — prior to his audience with the High Councilor, that is. Now he could feel the resistance beginning to build, while static electricity began to play through his power banks. This was indeed a most unpleasant feeling. His bright silver-blue plates were starting to lose their shine.

"And how do you explain this production loss, this . . . this minor detail as you call it. There must be a logical explanation for it, as there is for everything," boomed the High Councilor, this time his voice a heavy bass for impact.

"Yes," answered the Commissioner, his voice growing fuzzy with embarrassment and the strong feeling of inferiority, "Yes there is." He went on, "We have been having some trouble with those new Series 5000 TOTALMAN Robots that were recently sent to us."

"Trouble?" stormed the High Councilor, "What kind of trouble? Those robots should last . . . well, they should last forever if properly maintained." The Commissioner caught the sarcastic emphasis of the "properly maintained" bit. He knew that the Andeluvian System had never been high on robot maintenance. "Their circuits are made of pure zirrellium, which has been known to withstand even the heaviest of overloads, and their plates are high-grade zarconium — that is virtually indestructible. Their programming is nearly as intricate as yours and mine; What could possibly go wrong?"

"Well sir, they seem to be killing themselves off sir," replied the Commissioner meekly, feeling a shortout coming on.

"Not another mass suicide," pleaded the High Councilor, "I thought that we had programmed that out years ago!"

"No, no," replied the Commissioner, "Nothing like that. It is just that this new batch is different than all the others. They seem to actually like each other's company. Some

even converse while working. Many spend their labor breaks with another, and some even seem to enjoy physical contact with another . . . ”

“That is absurd,” stormed the High Councilor, “they must have been programmed wrong. At any rate, how is this holding up production?”

“Well it seems that when two or more of them become, well . . . friendly enough, if you will . . . ”

“No!” clattered the High Councilor.

“I am sorry sir, but I couldn’t think of a better term; how about . . . uh . . . chummy sir?”

“Oh, go on,” cried the High Councilor.

“It seems that after two of these new robots have shared each other’s company long enough, they find it necessary to share everything about themselves with each other: programming, memory patterns, scanning capacity, sensitivity factors, you name it! And then common cares and concerns as well — remember sir, that you yourself said that their programming is nearly as complex as our own.”

“I know, I know,” admitted the High Councilor.

“Now if they would just feed all this in, I am sure that the memory banks could handle it. But no, they seem to feel the need to combine and integrate the two masses of information, which, well, almost constitute consciousness, in such a way that the two become one. And this is where the overload occurs. It just burns those suckers out.”

“Well, couldn’t they be reprogrammed?” inquired the high Councilor.

“I am afraid not,” answered the Commissioner, “we opened a few up and all the circuits and banks were a melted, mushy, mangled mess . . . ”

“No, not my precious, new, zirrellium circuits!” cried the High Councilor; he was almost to the point of, oh well, never mind.

“And the funny thing,” added the Commissioner, “is that they are fully aware of what the out come will be, and yet they do it anyway.”

“That is positively illogical,” concluded the High Councilor, “I see no possible explanation!”

“Well sir, I do have a theory of my own . . . well . . . do you not want to hear it?”

“What . . . oh . . . alright, go ahead. Out with it!” growled his superior.

“Personally sir, I think that some prankster has programmed some of the old absurdities into the robots. You know, some paradox like: one must die to truly live, or that one receives only by giving everything away. Cute idea, huh?” jested the Commissioner.

“This is no laughing matter, Commissioner!” roared the High Council Chairman. “The identity of this . . . this prankster of yours will have to be discovered immediately and his business be brought to a halt!”

“But of course,” replied the Commissioner obediently, “but of course.”

Window Pain

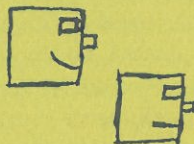


The windows of a house
When a home
Are its eyes,
As I look out them
To see.

And a home is a place
Where a heart and a face
Live inside
Contented to be.



So here I will stay
The whole of the day
To look out my windows and dream!

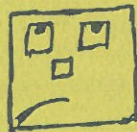


and now I know —



The windows of a house
When a home
Are its eyes;

And these are the eyes
That I despise;
For out and beyond them
I'm forced to see —
The essence of
Reality!!

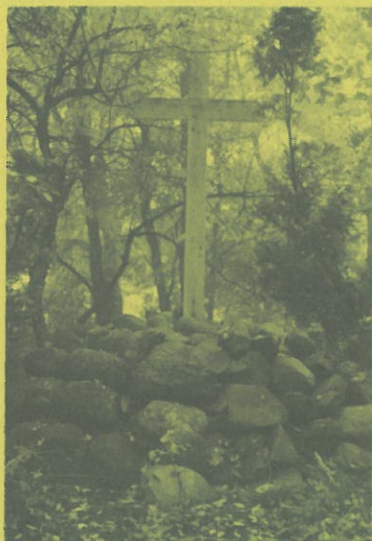


Tom Cortes

Modern Courage

Now, distant from more daring days,
Ambition will more safely stalk;
Prometheus for his candles pays,
And Icarus would rather walk.

T.H.



Le Jock Prayer

Lord bless this jock from head to toe,
And help me beat my every foe.
With cunning ways, and skills so rare,
Make me honest so I play fair
Bless my feet that make me swift,
And bless my mind so it won't drift.
Please bless my strength and fearlessness,
But first please cure my nervousness.
The prayers above you could forsake,
If you'd bless my bra so it won't break.

K.S.

Contrast

a thoughtful vision —

He didn't want to fight anymore. He was a good soldier, a damn good soldier, as the general might say. Until yesterday.

Now he sat as the other soldiers, but withdrawn and quiet. Private Rainer took out his photographs and looked at them differently than he ever had before. There was his mother — proud, but worried, as mothers always are; and there was his little brother, Jerry. A tear ran down private Rainer's cheek, twitching with thoughts of yesterday. Oh, why couldn't he get it off his mind!?

"Hey, c'mon! We were heroes yesterday, Jack!" proclaimed a soldier plopping down next to him.

Rainer turned his head, not facing the soldier, but rather with his eyes fixed on the top of a tree. "She cooked him, Jim. She cooked that kid!" Now he faced Jim, an enlightened, mad gleam in his eye. "It ain't right. It ain't right, and it's our fault!!"

"Look, Jack — who caused this war, huh?! It's the enemy's fault, not ours! For God's sake, we're fightin' to stop damn shit like that!! Stay right here and let me get you some coffee."

But yesterday they were the enemy. Today they're *people* — with hearts, and feelings, and dreams.

In the morning, just as the troops were ready to move, Rainer found while searching through his pockets a strange packet of seeds given him by an old fellow soldier and friend. Rainer chuckled to himself as he remembered his friend's sincere words. "Make a wish and plant them." yes, he did have his strange times, but he was so darned sincere! Some say he deserted during battle, or was captured. But Jack knew that somewhere in the hills waited a half-breed child and it's mother. Rainer marched aloofly, no thoughts in his head for spells.

"Jack, did you hear?" broke in an excited, counseling voice. "If we take this ground, we're goin' home! The war'll be over in days!"

'Over,' thought Jack.

The battle ensued suddenly. Two days ago, Rainer would have cut 'em down like dogs, as the generals might say. Now he stood before a *man* — the same as he, but on the other side of his gun. As if their thoughts matched, the two moved not at all, but stood staring at each other. Then a shot rang out from another angle, and as one of the two men fell, the friend of the other drug that other to safety.

On a medic's stretcher a wounded man was left to lay for a moment. The wounded man was covering up a group of seeds just planted, while muttering words to himself. Then all left.

Years passed.

A small child at the edge of a huge, dense, beautifully serene forest asked, "Grandfather, how did the pretty trees come to grow here?"

The answer came, "There used to be very few trees here. After the war they grew, and I would say it seemed the more they grew, the more peace spread," the grandfather said thoughtfully. "I don't think there'll be another war. And even if, it could never be fought in there. That forest is too thick and tough for soldiers to move through. Not in there," the half-breed grandfather beamed to the child.

Tom Cortes

Studying Signs

Like priests of the Pharoahs reading sky charts
and studying signs that may mean nothing
but might reveal great rage or lust
to be blunted or at least appeased,
we professors read of birth rates,
arms budgets, trade and loans.
Great presences drifted through the room
and our charts warned of the death
of peoples, even nations. Our training prompted us
to sit quietly, to listen to the talks,
to consult the monographs and data,
while the presences laughed at our decorous impotence
and the peoples cried.
Our vigil ended, we enter our cars,
the signs of our caste, and return
to our modest temples and the lesser gods
we serve with more common helplessness.

John D. Groppe



The Tug

I stretched out my hand
As you also stretched yours.
Yearning, reaching, extending;
Our goal: the clasping of the pores.

You were working against gravity,
Pushing up, reaching high.
I instead, inched downward toward you,
For gravity was on my side.

With muscles constricting and relaxing together,
Our hands did finally meet.
The warmth of flesh against my own
Told the completion of our feat.

Suddenly, a tug from down below
Came through the hand I held.
And, from my high, top bunk bed,
Through the air and to the floor, I fell.

Annette Klinker

I

Isn't it funny
how we mask ourselves
with plaster casts so thin
that they break
with just one false move from
our real selves within?

M.E.

Farting in Church

Charles Borger

Winner of Best Student Prose

Bless me Father for I have sinned; it has been five and a half weeks since my last confession.

God is pleased that you humbly admit your guilt and seek his forgiveness. Now, what are your sins?

Just one this time Father . . . I . . . well . . . I kind of . . . well . . . you know . . . Yeeesss?

Well, I . . . I farted in church Father.

[Silence.]

Father, are you . . . still there? Are you . . .

Yes, yes of course. Uh . . . God . . . the Lord is pleased with your honesty . . . uh, let's see, are you sure you didn't disobey your parents or something, or . . .

Oh no, Father I wouldn't do anything like that — I love Mommy and Daddy very much, beside Mommy can be pretty wicked with a yardstick you know . . .

Oh. Well, you didn't fight with any of your little friends did you? or any of your brothers and sisters?

Father, you know I don't got any brothers; you know everything don't you? Don't you?

Uh . . . well . . . not really . . . I . . .

Sure you do. And I would never fight with Jenny; she's so much bigger than me, and all little Carey ever does is lay around and cry all the time — I could never hurt her — I feel sorry for her most of the time. But Father . . . I did tease Midnight, the cat. Does that count Father? . . .

Oh, no . . . I guess not . . .

I didn't think so.

Now then, did you tell any . . . any fibs, or did you snitch any cookies from your mother's cookie jar?

No, the only cookies I steal are chocolate chips. And all we've had is oatmeal for as long as I can remember. Yuk!

I see . . . well now, let's see . . . uh . . . did you . . .

No, honestly Father, all I did was fart in church. Once.

Well, that's not really a sin (in the conventional sense, at least).

Oh, sure it is . . . I mean . . . this one was. It was in the late mass last Sunday. The one that Father Bailey had. It didn't make much noise, but boy did it smell! The girls in front of me all turned around and held their noses and said, "P-U!" Jenny kicked me in the shin, and the baby that Mrs. Miller was holding started to cry. And all the people . . .

That will be enough, thank you. Now then, let me see, are you sorry, truly sorry for this . . . this sin?

Oh yes Father. Yes sir! The next time I do it . . .

Oh no!

The next time, I'm going to fart real loud, you know, when everything is quiet, like after the sermon or something. It's something I've always wanted to do, but just never had the nerve I guess. And you know why I've always wanted to? Because, man it would be fun. The old ladies would get all steamed up and red-nosed. The younger Moms would be embarrassed and all the girls would giggle. The boys would laugh quietly and try to hold it in, and the Dads wouldn't do anything at all. Wow, I could tell all the kids at school and nobody could say that they'd done better. It would be so neat. And it would sure loosen things up in there too. Don't you think so Father? Father? Father? Oh no, he's probably fallen asleep or something — or had a heart attack — oh my god! I better get out of here before someone finds out. Oh man! What am I going to do about absolud . . . abso . . . absolutism? I know! I'll just say three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys like I always do . . . oh god . . . maybe I'd better make it four Our Fathers and four Hail Marys . . .



*Wind, Earthquake, Fire, Whisper
(or, Show Us a Sign)*

The branches cried out for
Life and faith to refresh their
Parched lips

but no crashing currents
Streamed up through the vine. No violent
Torrents pelted the dust to clay.

Only the soft dew condensed, almost
Unnoticed, and whispered its presence to the
Leaves, who were enlightened and drank
their fill.

Charles Borger



The Brook

A brook moves along
slowly, silently.
Suddenly the brook
turns into a raging river
As if to express its
anger
At winter for melting
into spring.

Brenda Harsha

The Visit

Strange and beautiful;
Blues and greens —
With your majestic, brilliant
Tinted scenes

Skies of blue
And plushy white —
Transforming to pinholes
Of the heavens' light

Rain that does not wish
The forest to die,
Leaves colored arcs
Up in the sky

Superior mountains
Rise above
The graceful flight
Of the wing-stretched dove

Albino peaks
Of frozen rain
Add to this beauty
Once again

Moon that glows
On the blue ocean's floor,
Keeps waterfalls trickling
Evermore

Purple horizons
Stationed afar,
Engulf the landscape
As if in a jar

The dwellers of this world
I wish to see;
May I land
My superior machine

Although your world —
It wonders me —
With your resplendent,
Silken scenes —

Your people
I do not understand

Those who would kill
Their brethren man,
So that thin, green zylem
Be put into their hand

Metal slaves
That ruin your earth,
So that more
Can rise up
From the hearth

Instruments that probe
The vastness of space;
Trying to find
Our superior race

So to you
I wish
To put an end:
To save *our* world
From your treacherous trend.

Tom Cortes

Celebration

Warm walls sheltering babe in a basket,
A sister to love and hug.
A dog to hug and tug and run —
Run into the house whose walls are threatened
Boys will play with fire — flames go higher!
New house, three stories high,
A climb onto the roof while parents sigh,
Bedroom shared, sister fights.
Grade school walls never true,
North on the map is East in the room.
Auditorium shared with four hundred,
Lectures, books, exams duly noted.
Typing and shorthand and letters to send from
Cold office walls.
A lover to wait 'til business is done,
Laughter, joking, ceremony and fun.
Walls of a sleeping porch,
Blue board for books,
Parents nearby
With knowing looks.
Four walls with mortgage owing,
Margo and Lynda learning and growing,
A planter for flowers with glass wall to the ceiling
For beauty and sunshine and good family feeling.
Washington secretive walls with ears,
Rainbow clouds from weather balloons,
Rockets send colored pictures of earth,
Man finds the moon stark and naked.
Books to pack, memories to reckon
As a thousand miles begin to beckon
Retirement destination.
Mobile home walls lined up with true north,
Floor-to-ceiling windows with mountain view
Of meadows and mice and a black snake, too.

Butterflies by day, bats by night,
Sunshine on Susans, by moonlight Anne's Lace.
Orion tells time, geese the season,
A rainbow of ice crystals: petals in the sky
Changing into snowflakes
Falling gently by.
Then ice and sleet hold us
Indoors fast,
We reach for our book,
Leaves of Grass.

Sigrid Smith





Someday

Today we live in a cement garden that's inflating
Too big for the mold.
Our leader's an aged eloquent,
But we seldom do as we're told.

Notice the striking similarity?
the image should ring a bell.
A mistake in a simpler place in time,
Got us nothing but a home in Hell.

If our paradise was lost and our ignorance is bliss.
Because Adam and Eve were crossed and by uranium
We are kissed,
Then open are we surely to another degrading attack
On our being the deep dark alley where we walk
Without looking back.
Today the tempter is a bear.
He is shrewd, as was the snake.
But unlike the apple-eating serpent,
Of fire and death he'll partake.

I pray the day never comes when the devils assemble the kings.*
For dear life as I now know it,
Will be burned by an atom in the eve.

Karyn Nosal

The Ribbon

"It's just a phase," she says
And turns to fold the clothes.
She sees a single faded ribbon
And recalls the days
Of bobby socks that always fell,
Ponytails that came undone
And sock hops.
Then suddenly she smiles
And whispers as she takes my
hand . . .
"I understand."

Brenda Harsha



The Treasure of Terriers Tainting Trimmed Lawns

Tireless, trotting to and fro,
he just won't quit. Tawny toned,
scraggly strands trap ticks and

fleas too attached to take off.
Turning, he tears off, trained
tip to earth, trying the same

trail as last time. Any idiot
can tell the rabbit hasn't
travelled in two weeks;

I'm not a tad bit fooled, but
bored enough to turn my
attention elsewhere.

The moment he's been waiting for,
he hunches on haunches and deposits
his fuming fecal fertilizer

that people step in.

Charles Borger



Death, the Final Frontier

My, but aren't we fond of naming and explaining
Things we know nothing about.

For instance, when I die, my soul is going to
Rush from my body with my dying breath (hot air)

And zoom right up to Heaven. I certainly
Wouldn't think of it stopping off at Purgatory
Or anywhere else, on the way. I don't do
Mortal sins!

Or,

Like when I die, I'm going to float about
In a dreeeeaaamm state for the looonnggest time,
Man, and like when I'm good and ready, I may
Float on up to Heav . . . No, I'll float into
The overpowering and all-encompassing Light
And become one with this warm, loving
Energy concentration, you know, like the Force.

I's just goin' home ta sweet Jesus.

Well, when I die, at least I'm going to go
With the utmost dignity, that is, if I die
While on a commando raid to save helpless
Women and children refugees from ruthless
Communist terrorists . . .

Oh, how can you even talk about IT, IT's so
Morbid and grotesque. Especially
In, oh what's it called again, you know,
"Night of the Living Dead," that's it. And
"Frankenstein Meets the Werewolf," and the one
By Stephan King, "The Shining." "The Stand"
Is pretty wild and fantastic too. But death,
(oh no, I said IT!) oh, like gag me with a . . .

IT's . . . IT's . . . I think IT's fun, I love all
Those movies, yet somehow I suspect that the
Real thing is somewhat less glamorous.

What if death really is death? That sure would
Screw a lot of people up wouldn't it?

What is death? The final frontier, the last
Great struggle, the end of the great fight, the
Great transition, the unknown, the deepest,
Darkest end, all and/or none of the above?

How in the hell should I know, I've never done it
Before, I've never even seen anyone else (God,
Don't just come right out and say IT!) pass on,
Pass away, pass gas . . .

But everyone does IT eventually, and that is
Sufficient to tell me that above all else,
Death is a part of life.

I may not know much about death, but I do know
Something about life. In fact, life's really
All I have to work with. And since death is
Out there, somewhere out of sight, yet clearly
In the masterplan, I think I had better start packing
Things, the good things, into life. Good friends,
True loves, crazy dreams — made realities maybe? smiles
On little faces, a good struggle, or two, or three, or . . .
And lots of scraped knees, tears, and band-aids,
All this, so that when I go,
I can die like a man — shivery, scared as hell,
Crying, needing to be held, like a big baby,
Terribly weak, wonderfully human,
And somewhat fulfilled? (maybe?)

Charles Borger

A Decision Between Life and Death

Lorna Eynik

Cast: Daniel Jenkins — an injured soldier
Mrs. Jenkins — Daniel's mother
General Jones — Daniel's commanding officer
Private Gebele — another soldier in the army
Doctor Albers — Daniel's physician
A nurse
Achilles — a character in Mrs. Jenkin's dream
Jesus Christ — a character in Mrs. Jenkin's dream

Mrs. Jenkins is cooking breakfast when she is interrupted by the ringing of her telephone.

Mrs. Jenkins: Hello.

General Jones: Yes, hello. Ummm — is this the Jenkin's residence?

Mrs. Jenkins: Yes it is.

General Jones: Am I speaking to Mrs. Theresa Jenkins?

Mrs. Jenkins: Yes, this is she.

General Jones: Mrs. Jenkins, this is General Jones from the United States Army. I fear I have a bit of unfortunate news to relay to you.

Mrs. Jenkins: Oh God — not my Danny.

General Jones: Yes, I'm afraid it is. Daniel was involved in a bomb attack at Beirut, Lebanon. He has suffered some pretty serious head injuries, Mrs. Jenkins. I think you should come to the hospital immediately. The army will send a car to your home to transport you to the airport; from there you will be flown to the hospital in Beirut. We would send Daniel home, but the doctors feel that it is too risky to move him at this time. Can you be ready in one hour?

Mrs. Jenkins does not answer, but stares numbly off into the distance.

General Jones: Mrs. Jenkins, did you hear me? Are you okay?

Mrs. Jenkins: What — an hour? yes, I'll be ready.

General Jones: One other thing, Mrs. Jenkins, how will I be able to identify you at the airport?

Mrs. Jenkins: I'll be wearing a bright yellow coat, and I have bright red hair.

General Jones: That should be sufficient. I'll see you soon.

Mrs. Jenkins slowly puts down the receiver. In a dazed condition, she moves up the stairs to pack a few belongings in her suitcase. Soon, a knock is heard at the front door. Mrs. Jenkins grabs her suitcase and hurries downstairs to answer the door.

Private Gebele: Mrs. Jenkins?

Mrs. Jenkins: Yes.

Private Gebele: I'm Private Gebele from the United States Army. I was sent by General Jones to transport you to the airport. Are you ready to go?

Mrs. Jenkins: Yes, I'm ready.

Mrs. Jenkins picks up her suitcase and locks the front door.

Private Gebele: Here, Ma'am, let me take that for you.

Private Gebele puts the suitcase in the trunk of his car. Both he and Mrs. Jenkins get in the car and drive off toward the airport.

Mrs. Jenkins: Do you know how seriously my son was injured Private? I know that he suffered serious head injuries, but is there any hope left for him?

Private Gebele: I'm sorry, Ma'am. Being stationed in America, I'm afraid I don't really know about the injuries suffered by our troops in Lebanon. However, I'm sure he is receiving excellent medical attention. That American hospital in Beirut is one of the finest in the world. The facility was just built last year; so, it houses the newest medical equipment and employs some of the world's best physicians. I'm sure that he'll be fine. It will probably be just a matter of time until he recovers.

Mrs. Jenkins: Dear God, I hope you are right for my Danny's sake.

For the remaining portion of the trip to the airport Mrs. Jenkins is silent. Her hands are clasped together, and her lips are moving rapidly mouthing a silent prayer.

Private Gebele: Ma'am, we are at the airport now. I'll get your bag and make sure that you are settled on the correct plane. Okay?

Mrs. Jenkins: Thank you Private. You are so kind.

Private Gebele walks Mrs. Jenkins to the plane: soon she is airborne. When the plane arrives at Beirut several hours later, Mrs. Jenkins gets off the plane and is met by General Jones.

General Jones: Mrs. Jenkins?

Mrs. Jenkins: Yes. How is Danny, General? Please tell me.

General Jones: From what I understand he is in rather critical condition. He suffered severe injuries to his head, and he is presently in a coma, Mrs. Jenkins. However, the Doctor will be able to tell you much better just how serious Daniel's condition is.

The two leave the airport in General Jones' car. In just a few minutes, they arrive at the hospital. General Jones takes Mrs. Jenkins to see Doctor Albers, Daniel's physician.

General Jones: Doctor Albers, this is Mrs. Jenkins, Daniel's mother. I'm going to leave her with you for the moment. I must get back to the base; however, I'll stop by the hospital later on this evening.

Mrs. Jenkins: Doctor Albers, can I see Danny?

Doctor Albers: Yes, of course, come this way, Ma'am.

Doctor Albers guides Mrs. Jenkins a short way down the hall into Daniel's room. Daniel is lying in a hospital bed with tubes protruding from all over his body. In the right corner of the room sits a machine with a wire leading from the machine to Daniel's heart. The steady beating of his heart can be seen by light waves flashing across a screen.

Mrs. Jenkins: Oh my — what are all those tubes for?

Mrs. Jenkins' eyes come to rest on the machine sitting in the far right corner of the room.

Mrs. Jenkins: And what is that machine for?

Doctor Albers: Didn't anyone tell you?

Mrs. Jenkins: Tell me what?

Doctor Albers: Sit down, please. During the bomb attack, Daniel suffered severe head injuries, Mrs. Jenkins. Shortly after he arrived at the hospital, his heart stopped beating; his brain was no longer functioning properly. That machine and the will of God are the only two things keeping your son alive.

Mrs. Jenkins: You mean if we turned that machine off, he'd die?

Doctor Albers: At the present time, yes. Still with time we are hoping that he may recover.

Mrs. Jenkins: Only hoping, Doctor. You mean my baby may die? How much hope is there of a full recovery? Tell me the truth. Will he ever be the same boy?

Doctor Albers: The hope for a complete recovery is a faint glimmer, but the hope is still there, Mrs. Jenkins. However it is much more likely that if Danny comes out of the coma, he will have brain damage and will require extensive medical care and attention. Thus, the hospital's administrators give you the right as a parent to decide if you want to let Daniel die by unplugging the machine or to let him live by means of this highly technological life support system.

Mrs. Jenkins: Can I think about that?

Doctor Albers: Yes, but the sooner you make your decision the better. Well I have to go and check on other patients. I'll stop back later to check on Daniel's condition.

After Doctor Albers leaves the room Mrs. Jenkins kneels by Daniel's bed. With hands clasped, she begins to plead with Daniel. Tears stream down her face.

Mrs. Jenkins: Please Daniel. Please answer me. You must get better. You are all I have left. Please don't leave me alone.

Hours later, a nurse enters the room. She brings Mrs. Jenkins down to a waiting room and gives her something to eat. After the nurse leaves Mrs. Jenkins turns on the television and picks at her food. Finally she sets the tray down and lies down on a nearby couch. She soon falls into a fitful sleep with the television still playing in the background. Shortly Mrs. Jenkins begins dreaming about the decision that she must make. The following scene is a portrayal of Mrs. Jenkins' dream. Mrs. Jenkins is walking through a graveyard. Mys-

teriously one of the tombstones swings open like a trapdoor, revealing a huge underground room; Mrs. Jenkins slowly descends into this deep chamber. Seated at a table in the vault are Achilles and Jesus Christ. Both characters seem to already know about the decision Mrs. Jenkins is faced with and ask her what she plans to do.

Achilles: Good evening, Mrs. Jenkins. Rest your weary body on this chair.

Jesus Christ: Yes, please sit.

Achilles: So, have you made your important decision yet, Mrs. Jenkins?

Mrs. Jenkins: Why how did you know about Danny? I don't even know you.

Achilles: Oh excuse me, I'm Achilles and this is Jesus Christ. To answer your first question, Jesus told me about your problem; He knows everything you know. We were just discussing your problem. I think that I have the correct solution, but Jesus just doesn't agree with me on the matter.

Mrs. Jenkins: Really? Please both of you tell me your view on my situation. I need all the guidance and advice that I can get. Achilles, do you think I should let Danny hooked up to a machine in hopes that he may somehow recover?

Achilles: I think that you should unhook Daniel from this machine. Letting Daniel lie on a bed with his life being supported solely by a machine is severely humiliating especially to a brave young warrior like your son. A man wants to be independent. Let him die while he still has some dignity remaining. Let him die before he has wasted away to a skeleton, a mere image of the brave man he once was. Also even if you allow him to remain hooked up to this machine when he awakes from his coma, he still may not be able to think or do anything for himself. A man who can not take care of himself would much rather be dead than to be a burden to the people he loves.

Jesus Christ: May I interrupt for a moment, Achilles? Even though Danny may not be able to do a lot of things that he was accustomed to doing before the accident, he will still be able to do some useful things. I'm sure he could find worthwhile activities to pursue. Mrs. Jenkins, my Father sometimes works in strange ways, but there is always a purpose to His actions. I'm sure He must want Daniel to remain alive, or He wouldn't have made it possible for Danny to receive such excellent medical attention.

Mrs. Jenkins: Both of you when speaking, spoke as though Danny would definitely come out of his coma. What if Danny remains in his coma? What good is he doing anyone then? I hate to think of my son lying indefinitely on a hospital bed barely alive supported only by a thin wire leading from a sophisticated piece of metal.

Achilles: Why don't you unplug Danny from the machine? If God wishes him to live he will survive without its help. If Daniel lives without the help of this machine, you will also be preserving his dignity because he would now be struggling for his life without any mechanical aid.

Jesus Christ: I believe that you should leave Danny connected to the life support system for at least one year. My Father once told me that He helps those who help themselves. If

after one year Danny is still in a coma, then, unplug the machine. As Achilles said if God wishes him to continue to live, He will not permit Daniel's death.

Mrs. Jenkins: But even if my son comes out of his coma, he may be a vegetable. I don't know if I could bear watching Danny lie in a bed the rest of his life after watching him lead an active, happy life for so many years.

Achilles: If your son comes out of his coma and can not think or move about, but merely lies in bed staring emptily into space, kill him. He is not doing anyone any good, and he is merely serving as a means of mental torture to you. I know if I had ever received such a terrible wound on the battlefield that I could no longer fight or even move about, I would rather have had someone stab me and put me out of my misery than allow me to live in such a pitiful state.

Jesus Christ: Please, Mrs. Jenkins, do not listen to Achilles. I agree that it would be hard on you to view your immobile once active son, but as I said God has a purpose for all living creatures. This will not sound like a very comforting thought now, but maybe your son's condition would remind millions of people just how fortunate they are to have healthy minds and bodies. Maybe some of these people would then be motivated to put their healthy minds and bodies to some good cause. Also, even though Danny might be a vegetable, he would be alive, and wherever life is present there is hope. Please give your son a chance for life, Mrs. Jenkins.

Mrs. Jenkins: I believe, that I'm more inclined to side with Christ, Achilles. For one thing his solution to my problem offers both hope for my son's life and hope for my own life. My motives for not unplugging Danny from that machine are somewhat selfish. I really don't want to terminate Danny's life for fear of being left alone in this world. Danny is the only family that I have.

Achilles: Well you can do as you like with Danny's life. After all Danny is your son.

Jesus Christ: Just a minute, Achilles. Even though Danny is Mrs. Jenkin's son, she doesn't have the authority to decide whether Danny lives or dies. That decision rests solely on my Father's shoulders. My Father told me the other day that He becomes furious when an arrogant human thinks that he can take the life of another human into his hands. He is extremely hurt when one human eliminates another human by murder, abortion, euthanasia, etc., for He loves all human beings. Also, Mrs. Jenkins, it is not really selfish to want Danny to live. Everyone needs someone to love and someone to love them in return. Just remember that if Danny dies, my Father and I still love you. You can always turn to us with your problems through prayer.

Mrs. Jenkins: Well, I guess then that this is my final decision. I'll leave Danny hooked up to the support system for one year; then, if he is still not better, I'll unplug the machine. After Danny's disconnected from the machine, God will make the final decision concerning Danny's life.

With the announcement of Mrs. Jenkins' decision Achilles and Jesus Christ disappear into the darkness. Mrs. Jenkins' next vision is of her son's casket slowly being lowered into a

grave with the national anthem playing in the background. She quickly wakes up in extreme fright fearing that her decision is no longer necessary because her son has died. Once she opens her eyes, however, she realizes that she is still lying on the hospital couch, that her talk with Achilles and Jesus Christ was merely a dream and that the national anthem she heard was merely a television station going off the air. Mrs. Jenkins just sits up when Doctor Albers walks into the lounge of the hospital.

Doctor Albers: I was glad to see you sleeping a little earlier, Mrs. Jenkins. I think you needed a good rest. The reason that I came down to the lounge is that I wanted to see if you had made a decision about what you wanted to do with Daniel. Have you made any decision yet?

Mrs. Jenkins: Yes, Doctor. I've decided to let Danny hooked up to the support system for one year; then —

The scene ends with Mrs. Jenkins in the process of relating the decision she has made in her dream to Doctor Albers.

Us

What of us?
The quiet ones
who dream,
and sing songs
no one will
ever hear —
no one listens
to us.

What of us?
The gentle ones,
who fight our
wars with words,
not fists,
but no one seems
to care if we
win or not.

What of us?
The soft bodied,
with lonely hearts,
who will love us?
For no one
notices the
beauty of
smokey grey
campfires,
the simple
things in life,
or us.

Brenda Harsha

Desire

Proud Adonis standing fair
Eyes of autumn
And sunlit hair
Shall not a mere mortal be
That none other dares compare
A face that only gods could send
Surely thee must be to me
What venus was to men
Tempting for mine eyes alone to see
That which caused a trembling to these hands
A desire that renders a soul to let
What mystical powers dost thou possess
That stills this beating heart
A heart that craves thy kiss of silk
And lingering touch of velvet
Fair Adonis standing there
Could thee but look this way
And meet my longing stare
Surely thee could hear this heart
That beats so with despair

Rose



The Thinker

A person that you seldom see . . .
caught up in his reality

Re-living things that have begun
and dreaming of the things to come

A shadow cast upon the wall
a distant echo in the hall

His thoughts in chaos, feelings torn
he finds the calm within the storm

And if the others pass him by
he smiles to know the reason why

For Thinkers have a greater task:
to face what others cannot ask

He puts the trivial on a shelf
to find the Truth within himself.

M.E.



the world is crying

god, the world is crying in late November.
the trees stand bare for all their leaves
have taken their lives.
the wind isn't even angry. it's just
cold and lonely as if it doesn't give
a shit about anything.
reminds me of me.
the toy cars go by in an endless hopeless
single file forever and ever until they either
come to the edge of the earth and are lost
or they run out of gas.
I'm terrified to join them, yet I'm already there —
just going by — never stopping for anything or anyone.
mine is an armoured car, I'm safe
and sorry
sorry that the trees are on the other side
of the glass and the grass is under my wheels.
I'm sorry that the people are just people.
their reaching hands and searching eyes
are expecting some consolation.
the small magic automobiles file on, splashing
tears from the roadway on pedestrians and passers-by;
bare trees bow in grief and wet birds weep faintly,
and the world is crying in late November
because I do not laugh.

charles borger

Mirror

Lonely rooms
and empty faces
shattered dreams
of distant places
Gutless Child
the crowd replaces
 this is what I see.
She knows what
she'd like to do

But she'll not make
one dream come true
she hasn't got
the courage to
 the mirror says it's me.
Whirlwind thoughts
she'll never be found
Stagnant ways
on trodden ground
Her future ends
without a sound
 save tears you'll never see.

M.E.



A Casual Acquaintance

Charles Borger

I was working in the farrowing house that afternoon, sorting out the feeder pigs. Steve said that we would ship them as soon as we could get a hold of a buyer. He wanted me to sort out the crippled ones and the runts, and I think that he was going to give them to his brother Jim, cheap. I ran them into a pretty small pen which wasn't bedded very well, and as a result, they all got kind of greasy and were really a pain in the ass to sort.

Well, after I had caught about a dozen and a half of the smallest ones, and thrown them out, I was washing the pigshit off of my hands at the front of the building when I noticed someone coming up the drive in an old '65 Ford pick-up. People had been stopping all day long to see if their bids had been accepted or not, from the sale. Some had even already picked up some of the equipment they had bought. There was still, however, quite a bit of stuff parked or laid out in the grass barnyard. Someone had stopped to get the old sickle mower which used to mount on the 3020, and another old guy in a flatbed had picked up the David Brown about an hour earlier. I had asked him if he needed any help and he said he thought he could manage. I watched him hook up an old rusty winch to the tractor to get it loaded. This guy who had just pulled up with the light blue '65 Ford was probably here to claim something too. He backed up to the attachments which had gone with the International Cub, which I just then noticed to be nowhere in sight. The guy had opened the endgate and was struggling with the rotary mower attachment, when I walked over to see if I could lend a hand.

"Need some help?" I ventured.

A short, dark man with greasy, black hair lined with grey here and there looked up at me and said in a stern and serious, yet gentle and easy tone of voice, "Yeah, if you would." He was what I would guess to be 35 to 40 years old, appeared to be of Hispanic descent, and had a coal black mustache and goatee, the latter of which he sometimes stroked while talking.

I helped him push the mower up to the front of the truck and said, "Well, it looks like you got a whole outfit here."

"Yeah," he replied, "I'm working for a guy over by North Judson, and he's got a lotta land — you know, a buncha lawns and orchards with small trees, and that Cub'll be perfect for takin' care a that stuff."

"You mean it's really too big of a piece of land for a regular riding mower to cover?" I asked.

"Yessir that Cub's really a good size," he answered, and then added, "I picked that up this morning, Steve was here then. You know, I used to go to school with Steve, 'course he was ahead a me. He was a senior, I think, when I was a freshman, or in junior high." He paused for a minute, and then asked, "Do you go to school out here, or are you from around here?"

"I'm from Ohio," I replied, "and yeah, I go to school out here."

"Boy, when I was a kid, we used to fight with the college kids all the time. We really hated those bastards and you know, I'm not sure if I could even tell you why, Goddamn, I bet there wasn't a night that went by when we weren't fighting about something or other."

"Really?" I asked, not really expecting an answer, but mainly just in acknowledgement, and encouragement for him to continue.

"Yeah, those times were great. Shit, all anybody wants to do nowadays is screw and drink. That's about the way it is, isn't it?"

"Yeah, that's true," I agreed, as one who is unsure, and afraid to disagree with something that sounds pretty good. He hefted the small garden plow on to the endgate and I helped him maneuver it into place.

"Yeah, times sure do change," he concluded. "I had a good job in the mills after high school, and I was married. And things were going pretty good. Then I lost my job, and then my wife left me. After ten years a marriage, she up and left me for another man. I didn't take her anywhere — that's what she said. Well, she coulda told me, she didn't have to just pick up and leave, so sudden like."

"Yeah," I agreed.

"Ten years a marriage . . . , and now we're back together."

"Really?" I asked.

"Yeah," he answered, "That's the way it goes sometimes."

We loaded the white roll bar, and then did the same with the sickle mower, all the while being careful to stack things so that they wouldn't shift when he drove them home.

Without notice, a look of anxious concern came to his tired eyes and he said, "Yeah, my dog got killed this morning." At first, I didn't know if he was serious, but a second take of that face assured me that he was.

"No, really?" I said.

"Yeah, I was keeping her over at my brother's, while I was working down here at Rensselaer. I guess he left her out this morning to do her business, an' she never came back. She went an' got killed on the road. I was over there for lunch."

"Damn, that's too bad," I said.

"I had one of them little Japanese or Chinese, shit I don't know, one of them little dogs, what do you call them, uh, Pekingese I think it is, or Chow Chow or something, hell, I can't remember. Anyway, it was really cold one night an' we forgot to let her back in. An', you see, the neighbors had this german shepard, and well, my dog got friendly with it that night. She had one pup. My wife said I should get rid of it and not get attached to it, 'cause we couldn't be feedin' two dogs. Well, the pup just kept gettin' bigger and bigger, and real pretty. I finally got rid of the momma and kept the pup. An' now she gets her ass run over on the road. Shit, I liked that dog — I musta had her for five years or better."

"Yeah," I said, "Steve's dog got killed out here last Fall, right in front of the college."

"Things sure are different now," he added finally, "Shit, I got a 1500 dollar enamel-spreading machine sittin' over at my brother's. I did some boats and campers an' stuff with it, but then they came out with these power painters, you know, with compressed air, an' hell, all of a sudden, what I had was obsolete. People could do it cheaper an' easier the new way. I was shit outta luck."

He was leaning on the side of the truck. We had everything loaded and the engine up. He had been staring down at the plow, but then he looked up at me across the bed of the pick-up and said, with some thought, "Yeah, I thought I was gonna be rich one day," he hesitated for a second, then added, "But things just didn't work out that way."

"Yeah," I agreed, for no reason in particular.

"Boy, you know the times really do change."

"Uh-huh."

"Well," he said finally, "I better get this stuff back. Thanks for the help. I'll see ya."

"Yeah, it was nice talking to you," I said, "You take it easy now."

"Yeah, you too," he said as he closed the door on the old Ford and pulled away slowly up the drive, kicking up a modest cloud of dust before he got to the pavement.

I turned, and his comment about being rich someday echoed in my head as I walked back towards the farrowing house. "You seem pretty rich to me," I told him to myself. Then after some more thought, "At least you've lived, really lived! Damn, you seem rich to me." I guess I should've told him that, but I didn't.

Classes in Springtime

Chair's too hard, writing surface too small
my papers begin to fall.
The classroom's too hot.
His chalk dust fingers are emphatically waving.
His lips are moving.
I can't hear a word he's saying.

I'm walking down the blanchd, sunny beach;
warm wind brushes back my hair.
I breathe in the coconut smell of my own tanning oil
and the whisper of salt in the air.
Hues of blue as far as I can see.
Cool, moist sand at my feet, warm sun at my back
and a sudden urge to run free

Then I notice
He's walking towards me, calling my name,
pointing his chalk bleached finger.

I'm sorry Sir, I wasn't listening!

Nichole Steininger



The Virtues of Procrastination

Greg Bruns

To procrastinate, according to Webster, is "to put off intentionally; postpone — to put off intentionally and reprehensibly the doing of something that should be done." Something that should be done? When? Mr. Webster, in the spirit of compatibility, avoids being judgmental whenever possible and rightfully so. It's up to the procrastinator to decide when the deed should be done. There is nothing negative about that, no harmful connotations, and yet society has branded the procrastinator unstable. Someone who delays or puts something off is considered a coward or weak. I reject the generalization all too often made when dealing with procrastinators and I offer the view that intentional delay and procrastination have a place in our society. (Note: In the spirit of true procrastination this essay itself has been delayed to the point that it will be handed in late.)

There is a maxim, "Never put off til tomorrow what you can do today." It is a maxim for sluggards. A better reading of it is, "Never do today what you can as well do tomorrow," because something may occur to make you regret your premature action.

— Aaron Burr

In life there is an abundance of knowledge. In living comes the acquisition of that knowledge. Each day of our lives we experience more — taste, hear, see, and feel more than we did the day before. And to present the first of a bombardment of time-honored clichés: experience is the best teacher. Each day brings new understanding and the passing of each day leaves us all a little stronger, a little more mature, and a little wiser. A person learns something new every day. Therefore, it logically follows that a project undertaken today, by law of experience, would be inferior to the same project started a day later with a day's more knowledge under a person's belt. What's more, as Burr pointed out, "something may occur to make you regret your premature action." Better safe than sorry, I hear myself saying as the clichés continue to surface. But it's quite true. History has been altered by impatient men unwilling to wait for confirmation or additional information. Battles have been lost and men killed who could have been spared with the delay of one day or even several hours. "By delay he saved the state," wrote Emmius in reference to a Roman general who put off making a rash decision and consequently saved an entire nation from ruin.

"Delay is preferable to error."

— Thomas Jefferson

Once again a treasured adage comes to mind: haste makes waste. This notion is visible in practically every working environment from cement being poured too soon to form a bridge foundation that later collapses to a secretary rapidly sending off a contract to a client but leaving behind the essential figures of the case. Possibly the most obvious examples of haste producing error can be found on the college campus. A paper that is haphazardly put together to meet a deadline or to simply have out of the way being returned with a forest of bright red marks is a common sight for the typical student. Most liberal-minded professors would agree with Jefferson that, despite the inconvenience it may cause, they would rather receive a paper late that was done well than one done poorly and turned in on time.

"Punctuality is the thief of time."

— *Oscar Wilde*

I have a friend who exists on a precise schedule. He eats, sleeps, works out, and studies at the same times every day. He is always several days ahead in every course, he never turns in an overdue paper, and he is consistently on time for everything. He is also the proud owner of a bleeding ulcer, occasional insomnia, and high blood pressure. He virtually lives in the future. He becomes uneasy when he doesn't know what his next move will be.

Procrastination slows things down; it helps a person deal with the present. It gives back some of the precious time punctuality has stolen. "Delay gives strength," explained Ovid. "Delay matures the tender grapes and ripens grass into lusty crops." To carry the thought one step further, or more appropriately, backward: according to columnist Don Marquis, "Procrastination is the art of keeping up with yesterday." My liberal interpretation of Marquis' message is that procrastination is helpful in retaining the wisdom of yesterday. Those who live in the future lose the gifts of the past.

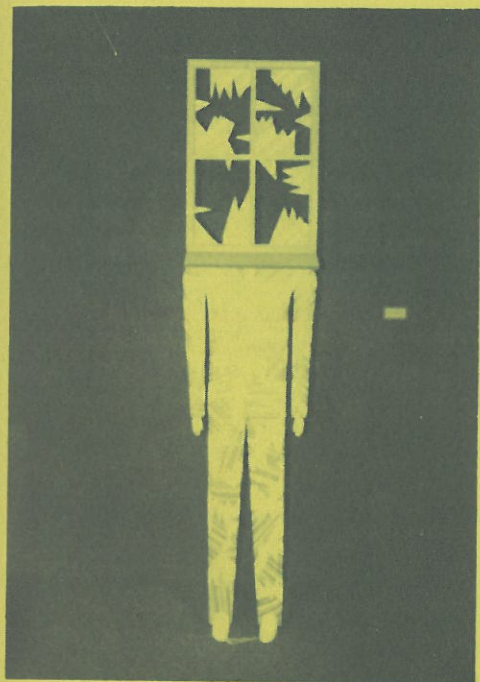
"Give yourself time and room; what reason could not avoid, delay has often cured."

— *Seneca*

Calvin Collidge once said that if you see ten troubles coming down the road, chances are by the time you reach them, nine will have gone another way. Many people take it upon themselves to worry in advance about everything that could possibly happen to them. They feel they need to be prepared for anything and everything that comes, and when a problem does surface they are devastated if an immediate solution is not within their reach. People shouldn't set out to find troubles so that they can be prepared to solve them in case they do come. We should all take heed from my favorite cliché — the final one of the essay — and cross that bridge when we come to it. Then when a legitimate

problem does arise, don't ignore it, but analyze it rationally. More often than not it will simply go another way.

Granted, procrastination taken to extremes can be harmful to a person's academic or professional career and a number of definite problems can be logically associated with habitual delay, but I will address those issues some other time . . . maybe tomorrow.



A Quick Glance

Face:
Over your shoulder
calm smoldering eyes.
Irony sought grin; fancy
meeting you here.
Yes, I knew you well
face . . .
Once.

Donald J. Pitcher

Memories of Rice Pudding and School

The sweet smell of mama's
rice pudding sets my taste
buds-a-watering.
It brings back memories
of coming home from school
on a cold winter day,
walking three miles with
my brother from Ascension.
He walks way ahead of me
with his pals from fourth grade.
I trudge along with lunchpail
and my make believe friend
Melissa.
Just a block away he slows up
enough that I fall in step with him.
Mama always said, "You had better
come home together."
I skip walk to match his steps.
We climb the concrete stairs
together and he opens the door.
I run past him to the kitchen
and peer in the oven and to my
delight find the pudding bubbling
hot.
Mama says, "It's done," and I
sit down to feast.

Michelle DonJuielle

Sheltering Rock

(An Honorarium to Catherine Fay, B.V.M.)

Adamant in her love for those in need,
firm in her resistance to those
lacking the courage of our earthiness
revealed, when shared, by Mary's son
is Catherine.

It is upon such rocks as these
that the fishermen's friend built his church
as a place where all — children all —
come to be fed and sing and dance.
She is like the granite arms of Ireland,
resisting the winds and the waves,
embracing her bays,
guiding the sailors home,
rocks flecked with mica to catch the glory of the sun,
rocks that shelter the sea birds —
the terns, sheerwaters, and gannets.

John D. Groppe

Our Diseases Want to Live as Much as We Do

Pass on one from time to time:
They're all the same.
When it's time to get serious
we can never remember what serious means
so hiding inside it remains
not waiting but
always ready
we can balance it on the
corner of the table where
it will defy gravity and refuse to fall
the eyes start that the
eyes start that the
circle circle
pass that on from time to time

Brian Capouch

The Sword Raebear

"Alas, Dark Knight of evil deed —
Come ye down
From thy black-armored steed!"

"Descend I shall;
But Shadow I'll need
To carry me away
When in my hand
Thine head shall lay!"

"The sword Raebear behold, Dark Knight,
For soon ye shall know
It's thundering blight."

"Come forth
Yon blue-armored sight!
Thy jewel-handled sword
Shall soon ride with me
In one accord!"

"Nay dare ye scoff at the hand of thy doom!
Here lies thy destiny;
Behold thy death loom."

Then from out of its sheath
The Dark Knight's sword sheared,
And in mid-air between them,
The two broadswords bleared.

A cut to the left
A smash to the right —
"Surrender evildoer!
Thy skills art not right!"

"My skills are perfected
Yon Gallant Knight,
As thou shalt now see
For first as a test
I merely toyed with thee!"

And the battle raged
As clearly it was dusk —
The diamond-handled Raebear
And the Black Knight's, made of tusk.

Then fatefully came the moment —
When the good Paladin fell
And standing over him
Did the dark one's bosom swell.

"Ha! Behold the spectacle
Of the terrorized Blue Knight!"

For thy new master prepare to hail
O, mighty Raebar,
As the Paladin's head you shall impale."

But the Paladin trusted his faithful belle —
It would not let him down
And he knew it well.

And the Black Knight
Wary of Raebar's fame
Decided to play
A more evil game.

As shadow plod near
a battle-axe he drew.
But with Raebar's blow to the handle,
Like a discus the axe-blade flew.

Up the Paladin sprang
As a weather-storm raged,
and Raebar he upheld
As it lightning voltaged.

A two-bladed bi-sword
The dark one drew
And two darts shot
From the bi-sword's hew.

The electrified Raebar
Flung them sparkling to the ground
As hissing and humming
Raebar swung 'round.

With a loud bellow
The Black Knight lunged forth
Plummeting the bi-sword
To fell good/knight to earth.

The Paladin swung upward
to meet the terrible blow
And Raebar connected
To set the bi-sword aglow.

And as the Black Knight trembled
From the charge in his hands
The neutralized Raebar
Crashed into armor strands.

As to sheath Raebar was put:
"Make well thy prayers alast
And let it be known I forgive thee
For thy heart was held acast."

The dark knight breathed his last . . .

Tom Cortes



Death by Nostalgia

I seem to remember a song like "California Dreaming," which played over and over . . . "I stopped out in a church I passed along the way, and I got down on my kneeees, (down on my knees) and I began to pray," . . . in my head on the laziest of lazy summer afternoons when my throat would be so dry that I could hardly swallow, and I would wait in the car for my brother to bring me a cold drink of water in a jelly jar.

I recall fondly times prior, yet the song didn't stick in my head until the slowest, steamiest part of 1969. We were loading up some old cars which had recently died of old age. Fred hoisted the pathetic hulks on to the metal hay wagon with the old Ford manure loader. Family cars which had held Mom & Dad and all the kids were hauled away along with first cars that had loved deep and lustily at drive-ins, and spun rubber from tires now entirely gone. Cars that had absorbed more beer and puke than is humanly possible, and fishing cars which Pop had taken every Sunday afternoon, with the skeleton of a catfish still under the front seat on the passenger's side. And of course, farm cars which had preceded the trucks, in which, after having the back seat removed, veal calves were hauled to market, leaving yellow babyshit on the door.

They had stood together at the edge of the woods for too many years recalling the best memories of a simpler time. The memories became more vivid with time so that their hearts had strained and broken under the pressure. This only opened the way to upstart saplings wrenching apart rusty radiators, and unfeeling juvenile adventurers who smashed lights and windshields.

So now they would go to the graveyard, where we would get \$20.00 apiece which was hardly worth the trouble of loading them up. Of course, they were out of the way to make room for more and that was good or bad.

But one oldtimer lived on with visions of the 1948 Mercer County Banner Fair and proudly displayed a sticker on the windshield to prove it. The carnival music of the ferris wheel, the eager salesman cries of the huckster, the familiar manure smells of the cattle and horse barns, and the taste of cotton candy on smiling young faces all would combine to damn an old soul. But we couldn't bear to deprive the old Ford of last minute pleasure. So it remains today with hornet's nests, cobwebs, and raccoon shit, among all the younger models.

I remember a song the day Pop died, although I don't know the title or the artist. It goes like . . . oh, it doesn't matter. The smile on his white stubble bearded face never stopped smiling when he came out to the farm to plant potatoes. My Grandpa would dig a hole and I would put one in with the sprouts up. He would always give me two or three pieces of Bazooka Bubble-gum, even though he would chew nothing but Red Man or maybe Red Horse. In a little while we would stop to rest and Pop would sit on an old potato hamper and smile a great smile with tobacco juice running down his wizened whiskered chin. There was little worry in those bright eyes then.

But what was that anxious look in his eyes this morning and why that tired, beaten expression? Had all the best times with Daddy and the rest of the family caught up? Had all those fishing trips to Windy Point followed by fresh bluegills and raspberry shortcake gotten the best of my grandpa?

They fixed him up and he was himself for the funeral. But sometime during the rosary, led by Mr. H-, I finally knew that nobody ever dies of old age, but rather of broken hearts and nostalgia.

And now every time I pass Grandma and Grandpa's house, which, of course, isn't theirs anymore, and every time I see Uncle Jess go by in Pop's old car, or even when I see the summer reflecting off the old cars in the woods while I'm standing at the road or going by on horseback, I pause, and say a little prayer for the poor souls or cars, people, and other old things, and hope that I do not stick around so long for the memories to accumulate and the best times to spin a web and poison me with the things I did or didn't do.

Charles Borger

Hidden Gratitude

The blood-red roses of her sacrifice
Were only orchids to my childhood days.
My foolish, sluggish heart learned slow the ways
Of love — my shyness hid my gratitude.
And as her love burned in her heart for me,
I knew not then the depth of loving flame
Nor yet the life, the heart, in that blest name
Of Mother — shyness hid my gratitude!
But now at last without that haze of youth
Her love stands forth above all goods of earth
And whispers to me of her joy at birth
Of me — O shyness, hide not gratitude!
Accept, dear Mother, from a grown man's pen
What mouth of youth had left unsaid 'til then.

— T.H.



There is a legend
A legend of old
Rarely remembered
Rarely told.

Of a lady that runs
By the third-moon light

To find her mate
Her only intent,
Yet she mends the torn
And straightens the bent.

If thou should happen
To find her 'fore dawn
On thy quest she will help you
Until dark is gone.

The Angel of Shintar
Trapped on the Earth
Awaiting the day
Of her mate's birth.

Tom Cortes



The Last Days of SJC

Charles Borger

PROGRESS REPORT: Excavation No. 251 — Located 123 kilometers due SE of CHI94215.

SUBMITTED BY: Archeological Team out of Midwest N. American University No. 13.

BACKGROUND INFO: Some years ago, a number of my colleagues and myself while passing over by shuttle the fertile plains SE of CHI94215 and heading for IND42734, noticed some small hills rising up rather abruptly from, and looking quite out of place among the waves of soybean dx143. This is, of course, the high protein, high sugar grain which was developed from two more primitive food crops of the twentieth century. We all know how well it grows on the plains below Lake MI125. When I arrived in IND42734, I logged through on the MASTER 5000 to one of the growers in the area over which we had flown. The woman told me that the hills had been there as long as she could remember, and that she grew her crops over them when possible and around them when not. Later, after returning to CHI94215, I arranged to have an aerial scan of the area made, and I was not surprised to find a fairly high concentration of metals, glasses, and plastics — all of which are prime evidence of ancient occupation by primitive, somewhat intelligent perhaps, human life forms.

WORK TO PRESENT: Work on the excavation began 6.73 months ago, the top layers composed mainly of enriched organic material, not unlike that making up the surrounding plains, yet at approximately 9.2 meters below the surface, the soil composition changed radically. This change basically consisted of ashe, obsidian, pumice, and other volcanic materials. This led us to suspect that our ancient village had been buried under the fire and brimstone, so to speak, of nearby Mt. Vepumius, which was, as evidenced by rock samples, a relatively young volcano. It had been formed in the late twentieth century following a powerful earthquake which had devastating effects on the high rise structures of many midwest cities. This rural hamlet which we supposed to be beneath the soil, was buried, we speculated, sometime before the mid-twenty-first century when the volcano was capped in order that the rich source of terralithothermal energy might be taken advantage of. There was a good chance, in fact, that the small rural social unit was enveloped by volcanic ashe much earlier, perhaps even in the late twentieth century when the volcano was first formed. I say this because there is no record of there ever having been any type of social grouping in this area, and therefore, it was probably as old as is reasonably possible. We hoped that further excavation would confirm our wild speculations.

We began excavation on a small hill at the extreme north of the supposed buried settlement. This mound eventually yielded the remains of a small structure which was elevated from the ground by a network of metal braces which had been badly deteriorated by oxidation. The braces also supported a large set of stairs which seemed to lead to nowhere at all. Beyond the stairs, we uncovered a part of an enmeshed metal strip bar-

rier. We followed the barrier, unearthing it as we went, and found that it enclosed a large rectangular area which included the stairs and elevated building. Well, this was certainly quite confusing. I supposed that the barrier could have been used for the retention of domesticated animals, although I could find no evidence of this. I also suspected that the fence may have been used to retain criminal ruffian types and the like, yet there was not nearly enough shelter in the little elevated structure. In addition to this, a large amount of guards would have been necessary to keep such hooligans from scaling the barrier. I dismissed both ideas as wholly impractical.

The ancient structures remained an enigma to us until we excavated the next hill directly to the south. This mound yielded the remains of a building which seemed very similar to our present-day shuttle bays. However, it did not seem to have the hinged roof or walls which would be necessary for a shuttle or more primitive form of aerial transportation to dock, or depart for that matter. A colleague reminded me, however, that the corrosion of time and the elements as well as the heat of the ashe could have welded such hinges fast.

The major importance of the excavation of this building did not lie in its likeness to a shuttle bay, but rather in the weapons which we came upon in one of its rooms. This was more important by far, since it told us, beyond the doubt, what the barrier was for. It was obviously used for some sort of gladiatorial contests, for in the small room in the supposed shuttle bay, we found an assortment of clubs, some wooden, some aluminum, as well as a number of long spears. Also, there were wooden discs with metal rims and heavy iron spheres. These were obviously objects which could be hurled at an opponent, as were a variety of other spherical objects made of less dense materials found in the same room. A somewhat puzzling find among the weapons was the several different sizes and shapes of inflatable animal skins. I reasoned that possibly these could have been pumped full of harmful or deadly gas before being made to explode in an opponent's face. No it was not a very pleasant prospect to imagine these primitive people engaging in gladiatorial events. And I have yet to divulge the complete implications of the find. Among the weapons, I found all sorts of plastic and foam protective devices as well as hard shell head gear. It is good to know that they were civilized enough to wear protection because I also stumbled upon what seemed to be uniforms of sorts with numbers on them going up into the eighties and nineties. I shudder at the possibility of there being that many contestants on the field at once, battering, mangling, and perhaps even killing an opponent. And since the barrier had a hinged gate on it, I presume that it was closed and barred when the match began. The steps that I mentioned earlier which seemed to lead to nowhere were actually not steps at all, but rather seating for spectators to watch from. What kind of deviant mind could possibly derive pleasure from viewing such a gruesome affair? And since there was nothing to keep the contestants out of the seating area, I suppose the spectators could get into the action whenever they or the contestants desired. The way I see it, teams could have been flown in from around the country to compete with the "home team," and of course, the shuttles or whatever type of transportation used could be docked in the bay, or hangar I think is the old term for such a structure.

Next, we began excavation of the largest mound of all which was approximately 150 meters south of the primitive shuttle bay. To date, some interesting things have been uncovered. There are many rooms with lots of chairs as well as a small heavy table at the front. I assume that it was here that the great champions of the gory sport passed on to young contestants the strategies and techniques which had made them famous (as if there could be a method to this bloody madness.)

We have only recently reached the bottom of what seems to be some sort of punishment chamber. It is here that we have found our first actual skeletal remains. It seems that contestants which had committed some sort of offense were forced to listen to the raving and ranting of some old, senile, or insane member of the unit. This was possibly a former favorite who had for some reason become unable to continue playing. How do I know these things? I know them just from the way things were when excavated. The crazy one was found in the middle of the large auditorium-like chamber, and I say that he must have been mad because he apparently made no attempt to escape the calamity which brought an abrupt end to his settlement. He must have thought that what he had to say was so important that he could not go without finishing it. The contestants must have been forced to listen, because I can see no other reason why they would. I suppose the doors could have been locked or armed guards could have been placed in the balconies for enforcement. Several of the offenders clearly paid the price for their offenses whatever they may have been. Their skeletal remains were scattered about the chamber in such positions as would suggest that they were either dead when the disaster struck, or unconscious at the very least. Had they merely been asleep, they would have awakened and escaped.

Another room showed evidence of ghastly experimentation which is, of course, not at all inconsistent with the horrible gladiatorial matches or the terrible form of punishment previously mentioned. There were jars in this room in which assorted lower life forms were stored and preserved. Some contained whole creatures while others had only different internal organs within them. What type of unspeakable atrocities had taken place in this room, I could only imagine.

While work continues on this building, two smaller mounds, not far from it, are being worked upon. These mounds have been unearthed to show the remains of buildings which may have been residential, where the people actually lived. The rooms within these buildings contain some things which seem to confirm the notion that these early people had been violent in nature. For instance, in many rooms, devices can be found which seemed to have the sole purpose of transmitting sound waves at as high an intensity as a human being is able to withstand. I think that this would have been a good device to use in order to really bring out the aggressive tendencies in a contestant prior to a contest. It would also, of course, be great to ward off wild creatures or hostile neighbors. Large amounts of an impure, primitive form of alcohol were found in many of the rooms as well, mostly in glass containers or aluminum cylinders. I speculate that this was consumed before a match so that the body might be numbed to the great pain which it may have to endure. Another interesting find was a large quantity of plastic discs with grooves cut into them. These appear to have been primitive weapons. It seems that many rooms contained

mechanisms which would spin these discs at such a velocity that they would fly off. The depth of and distance between the grooves allowed the discs to be directed accurately at a given target.

To the south and west of these buildings is another structure. It contains a series of pipes and tanks. This seems remarkably similar to some primitive distilling equipment unearthed in past years in the mountainous land below the river OH719 far to the south. More than likely, this building served as a primitive brewery which produced the impure form of alcohol found in so many rooms of the residential buildings. The liquid was probably stored in the large tower uncovered not far from the building. I would venture that in addition to being used for consumption by the residents, this combustible liquid was also used as a form of fuel for this early social unit. Current excavation has shown that the liquid may have been used to embalm the dead as well.

A mound straight west of the largest building unearthed to date, has yielded a multi-purpose structure. There are rooms for instruction on the upper levels, while the lower level appears to have been a feeding area for the primitive people. We were not surprised to find that animal flesh was a part of their diet. The grizzly practice of consuming the protein-rich meat from lower life forms, which has of course since been banned, clearly shows the source of much of the violent nature of these ancient people. On a still lower sublevel of this same building, we have discovered what seems to have been an early morgue of some sort. The room has a long narrow platform running down the near middle of it. Behind the platform are many different varieties of the same impure alcohol that we encountered earlier. It looks to me like the dead bodies were lain upon the platform and then infused with the liquid. I am not sure why the many different varieties were necessary since any one type probably would have gotten the job done as well as another. I think that it may have had something to do with differing body chemistries among the corpses. I imagine that it would take less to preserve some bodies than others. And the alcohol certainly did preserve them well, and it is because of this that our best, most well preserved specimens have come from this area.

Well, excavation will continue on the remaining mounds still farther to the south, although I doubt if anything new will turn up, since it is obvious that we are dealing with a very simple people here, as evidenced by the fact that their lifestyle is so readily deciphered and figured out by the superior intellect of present-day humans, such as my colleagues and myself. I suppose that there is something that we could learn from this primitive people — so dominated by aggression and violence — but I do not have any idea what.

Fugue of the Prodigal

Blackness creeps from east to west . . . the sun
slowly erases its
raiment from the darkening canvas of sky.
Through the fading, fading kaleidoscopic
panorama of
playful nature floats a weary cry . . .
echoing from sepulchres somewhere far off, but
near,
near to the ear
they die:

 "I fain would eat the husks
 Swine feed upon,
 To tear my world to shreds
 And call it Love,
 To grasp and miss the true
 Reality."

Short-lived Hope!
A siren in the night!
A piercing shriek and a muffled groan —
and the night clothed me in its
inevitable folds.

T.H.